

Congressman Jesse L. Jackson, Jr. today released the following statement regarding U.S. Representative Jerry Weller's amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act of 2006:

"Congressman Jerry Weller once again has offered an amendment to federal legislation that will stall and sabotage the efforts to build the Abraham Lincoln National Airport through an innovative public-private partnership.

"In the last ten years, I have been a strong and tireless advocate for building the Abraham Lincoln National Airport, believing wholeheartedly that it would create thousands of jobs, help solve Chicago's dangerous aviation crisis and bring our region closer together.

"Following the best in American ethics and tradition, I have worked hard and played by the rules in developing a public-private partnership with world-class developers to build the airport without risk or funds from taxpayers. In developing this unique and innovative partnership and plan, the Abraham Lincoln National Airport Commission and its expert developers have scrupulously complied with all relevant state laws.

"In fact, the state earlier this year submitted to the Federal Aviation Administration the Abraham Lincoln National Airport Commission's plan for detailed review and approval, expected in 2006.

"But, now, after ALNAC followed a tedious, thorough and legal process, Congressman Weller proposes to change the rules, to turn back the clock and to squander the last and best opportunity to build the Abraham Lincoln National

Airport. In a reckless and outrageous power grab, Congressman Weller wants to throw out one set of rules that have always applied and replace them with another set of rules that have never applied.

"In a blatant violation of the U.S. Constitution's 10th Amendment, the Weller amendment would allow the federal government to interfere in the formation of a local airport authority that was legally established under Illinois statutes. In addition, it imposes federal procurement laws related to federal agencies that use federal funds on a local process that involves neither federal agencies nor federal funds. The ALNAC plan would build the Abraham Lincoln National Airport without federal funds.

"After years of work and millions in investment, Congressman Weller wants to scrap all progress, start all over and follow an unprecedented and impractical process. His proposal also undermines the ongoing negotiations among ALNAC, state and Will county officials. At my request, these officials have been meeting since August in an effort to reach an agreement on an airport governance structure that would allow the airport to be built by 2009.

"At a time when Illinois ranks 49th among all states in job-creation, we have a proposal that will create 15,000 new, permanent jobs. The ALNAC proposal is endorsed by 34 communities, representing nearly 500,000 people. Best of all, the project will be funded with private dollars at no cost or risk to Illinois taxpayers.

"Transportation experts agree that Chicago's aviation system is outdated, undersized and overloaded. The ALNAC proposal is the quickest, cheapest, cleanest and safest way to add new capacity to our constrained market. It also is the best way to grow the economy in an area that desperately needs jobs and economic development.

"Therefore, I urge Governor Blagojevich, Will County officials and all of those who have expressed support for the Abraham Lincoln National Airport to call on Congressman Weller to withdraw his proposed amendment," Jackson concluded.